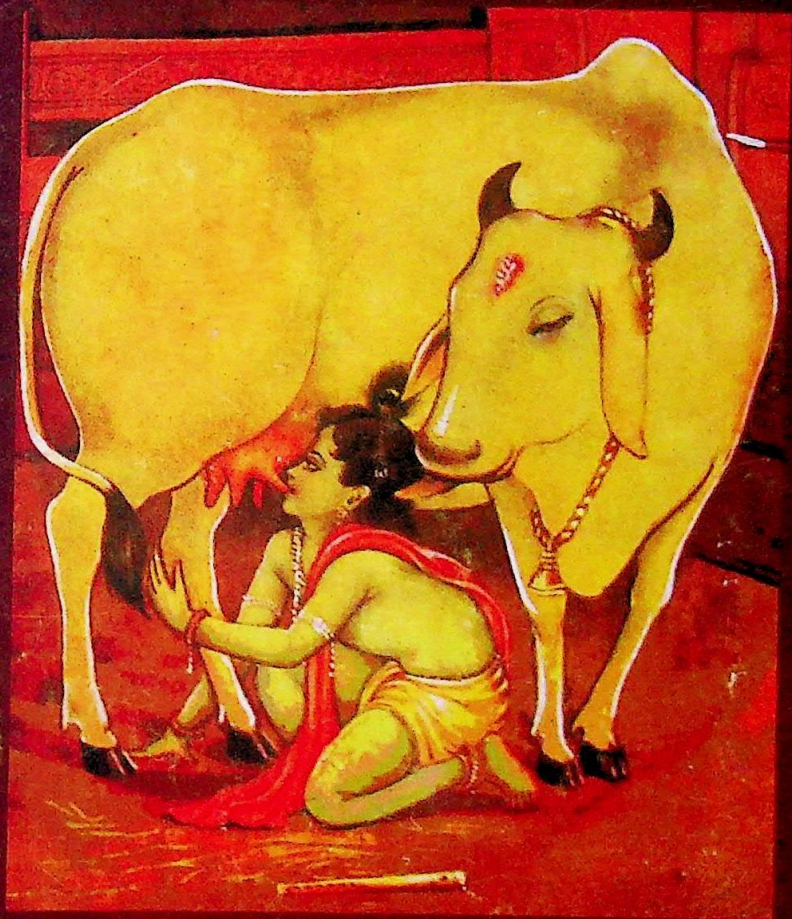


# SCRIPTURAL PROHIBITIONS ON MEAT-EATING



*aho'tidhanyā vraja-go-ramanyaḥ stanyāmṛtaṁ pītam atīva te mudā  
yāsāṁ vibho vatsatarātmajātmaṇā yat trptaye'dyāpi na cālaṁ adhvarāḥ  
(Śrīmad-bhāgavatam 10.14.31)*

"Oh, highly blessed are the Go and the cowherd-maids of Vraja, the nectar-like milk of whose udders and breasts was happily drunk in the form of their calves and sons by You, O Lord, for Whose satisfaction, even the *yajñas* have not been sufficient till today!"





*śrī kṛṣṇa vṛṣṇi-kula-puṣkara-joṣadāyin kṣmānirjara-dvija-  
 paśūdadhi-vṛddhi-kārin  
 uddharma-śarvara-hara kṣiti-rākṣasadhrugākālpam ārkam-  
 arhan bhagavan namaste  
 (Śrīmad-bhāgavatam 10.14.40)*

“O glorious Kṛṣṇa, Who brings joy to the lotus of Vṛṣṇi's race and swells the ocean in the form of the earth, the devatas, the Brāhmanas and the Go, the dispeller of darkness of hypocritic religion, the enemy of the rākṣasas on earth, Who is worthy of glorification for all including the sun-god! Let my salutations be to You as long as creation lasts.”

॥Śrī Śrī Gaura-Gadadharau Vijayetām॥  
॥All glories to Śrī Śrī Gaura and Gadādhara॥

# SCRIPTURAL PROHIBITIONS ON MEAT-EATING

Translated from original Hindi book titled  
*go-māmsādi bhakṣaṇa vidhi-niṣedha vivecana*

Compiled and written by

A resident of Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma

**Sri Haridas Shastri**

*nyāya-vaiśeṣika śāstrī, nyāyācārya, kāvya-vyākaraṇa-sāṅkhya-  
mīmāṃsā-vedānta-tarka-tarka-nyāya-vaiṣṇavadarśana tīrtha,  
vidyā-ratna*

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## Translators' note

The original book, named *gomāṁsādi bhakṣaṇa vidhi-niṣedha vivecana*, was authored by Sri Haridas Shastri Maharaj ji in Hindi. This book, written in the form of an essay, deals with the elucidation of the various scriptural injunctions that have been, over a period of time, misinterpreted for justifying meat consumption. We, as the translators, have remained true to the original work and have elaborated only those few areas that were succinct in nature. These elaborations, based on the explanations of the author given to us, have been done with his knowledge and approval.

The author, affectionately called as Maharaj ji, is a reverend saint, a renowned scholar and a *tattva-darśī* (seer of the Absolute Truth). Having obtained thirteen degrees in different branches of scriptural study from Varanasi, Maharaj ji is uniquely qualified to write on a subject pertaining to the *śāstras* that has been raising debates over centuries.

While proponents of meat-eating have been claiming that the *śāstras* recommend killing of animals, particularly during *yajñas*, the opponents, on the other hand, have been providing scriptural evidence to show that the scriptures do not permit *hiṁsā* (violence) in any form. With his vast knowledge of the scriptures and from his direct perception of the Supreme Truth, Maharaj ji in this book clears the doubts that some people may have regarding the question of whether the *śāstras* permit the killing of animals. Of special focus is the refutation of the claims that some scholars make in support of killing cows and oxen in Vedic *yajñas* to propagate the concept of beef-eating.

In Sanskrit, the word *Go* is a general term that refers to cows, bulls and calves of Bharat-varsha. In the absence of a single word in common English that would depict this meaning properly, we have kept the word *Go* as it is in this work.

Japesh Bandyopadhyay  
Paromita Bandyopadhyay



*kāruṇyādi guṇopetaṁ vedānta-ratna-bhūṣitam  
ahiṁsā-dharma saṁprktaṁ namāmy ahaṁ gurum param*

I bow down to the Supreme Guru who  
is endowed with good qualities like  
mercy, who is adorned with the title  
*vedānta-ratna* and who is an  
embodiment of *dharma* of *ahiṁsā*.







॥ Śrī Śrī Gaura-Gadādharaṁ Vijayetaṁ ॥  
॥ All glories to Śrī Gaura and Śrī Gadādhara ॥

*ahimsā paramo dharmaḥ*  
“*ahimsā* is the supreme *dharma*”

Among all *dharma*s that have been established with the purpose of welfare of the world, it is *ahimsā* (non-violence) that reigns supreme. This *dharma* of *ahimsā* is seen to be propounded in all religious scriptures.

The greatest of all *dharma*s is *ahimsā*. Religious, social and political leaders talk about following *ahimsā-dharma* for attaining happiness and peace. Hence it is essential to analyze this idea from the point of view of *śāstras* (scriptures). This effort, apart from being of service to mankind, will also be of service to the Supreme Lord.

*Dharma* has been propounded for spiritual growth and all-round prosperity and welfare. Therefore it can be said that anything that has the above as the goal, which leads to material prosperity, and yet liberation from material bondage is called *dharma*.

Etymologically speaking, the word *dharma* means that which protects all, nurtures all, prevents downfall and helps in achieving a higher state of existence. It is through *dharma* that a ruler can protect his subjects. This is the understanding of those who comprehend and follow *dharma*. Since *dharma* protects all, it is obvious that *ahimsā* (not committing violence in any form against anybody) is inherent within in it. True *dharma* always includes *ahimsā*. Hence, it is said;



*dhāraṇāt dharmam-ity āhuḥ dharmena vidhṛtāḥ prajāḥ  
 yaḥ syāt dhāraṇa-samyuktaḥ sa dharma iti nīścayaḥ  
 ahimsārthāya bhūtānāṃ dharma pravacanāṃ kṛtām  
 yaḥ syād ahimsā sampṛktaḥ sa dharma iti nīścayaḥ*  
 (Mahābhārata Śānti 109.11 –12)

“*Dharma* is derived from the idea of nurturing all. It is by *dharma* that the subjects are maintained. That which is equipped with the nature of protecting and nurturing is indeed *dharma*. *Dharma* is taught to all living entities for the sake of *ahimsā*. That which is equipped with *ahimsā* is indeed *dharma*.”

*mā hiṃsyāt sarvabhūtāni* (“Do not perform violence against any living entity”) is the injunction of the Vedas that forbids us from committing violence against any living entity. *hiṃsā* (violence) does not refer to killing alone but includes activities like causing physical or mental distress to any living entity, insulting or demeaning someone, misappropriating one’s belongings, being deceitful or making distressful allegations against someone. The Bhagavad-gītā and Manusmṛti advise to refrain from violence at all places and at all times. Bhagavad-Gītā 12.13 says, *adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām* (“no hatred towards any living entity”). Manusmṛti says, *ahimsayā ca bhūtānāṃ amṛtatvāya kalpate* (“One may hope to achieve immortality by practising *ahimsā* towards all living entities”). While explaining the idea of *dharma* for mankind, Manusmṛti (10.69) says, *ahimsā satyamasteyam śaucam indriya-nigrahaḥ* (“*ahimsā*, truth, non-stealing, purity and control of the senses ...”). It is from *ahimsā* alone that human beings are liberated from the cycle of birth and death. It is with the help of *ahimsā* that one provides protection to all living entities and thus one practises the highest *dharma*. The Adi Purāṇa says that out of all *dharma*s the supreme *dharma* is to follow *ahimsā* and thus provide fearlessness to all living entities.



All *dharma*s that exist on the earth for the welfare of mankind propound *ahimsā* as the supreme *dharma*. Therefore it is said in the Padma Purāṇa;

*praviśanti yathā nadyaḥ samudramṛju vakragāḥ  
sarve'dharmā himsāyām praviśanti tathā dṛḍham*

(Padma Purāṇa, Uttara 243.6)

“All rivers that flow along simple or circuitous paths, eventually enter the sea. Similarly, all forms of *adharma* (not following *dharma*) eventually enter into violence.” Lord Vyāsadeva also said;

*aṣṭādaśa purāṇeṣu vyāsasya vacana-dvayam  
paropakāraḥ puṇyāya pāpāya parapīdanam*

“In all the eighteen purāṇas, Vyāsa has two things to say. For *puṇya* (peity), work for others' welfare. For *pāpa* (sin), cause pain to others.”

Here causing pain means *himsā* whereas working for others' welfare is *ahimsā*, and hence, *dharma*. *Dharma* is the means through which the body, mind, intellect, etc. manifest their brilliance to the utmost. Śrī Vyāsadeva also says;

*idam eva dharmāḥ sarvasvaṁ śrutvā caivāvadhāryatām  
ātmanah pratikūlāni pareṣāṁ na samācaret*

“This is *dharma* for all; that one must listen to and keep in mind. That behaviour which is not favourable to one's own self must not be resorted to.”

Every human being desires happiness. No one desires distress, even in dreams. However, the general populace is ignorant of the true meanings of happiness and distress. The scriptures state;



*anukūla vedanīyam sukham pratikūla vedanīyam duḥkham*

“Understand *anukūlatā* (favourable circumstances) to be happiness and *pratikūlatā* (unfavourable circumstances) to be distress.” One should not perform such actions unto others that one would not like to be done unto one’s own self. Similarly, one should perform only such actions, as one finds to be favourable to one’s own self. This great teaching is found in all religious traditions of the world.

Wherever there is *himsā*, there is no Truth. From this it follows that there is no Truth in places where there is *himsā*. This is mentioned in the Devī Bhāgavata. Śrī Vyāsadeva, in a single utterance (as previously quoted) has established the essence of all religious traditions of the world.

*Himsā* occurs when there is unfavourable (*pratikūla*) behaviour towards someone. Hence *ahimsā* means not to behave with others in an unfavourable way. It is this simple rule of conduct that forms the crux of discipline, of dutifulness, of good behaviour and of patriotism. Through such behaviour one achieves supreme happiness – physically, mentally, intellectually and spiritually. Thus the purpose of one’s existence on earth is served.

*śrūyate dvividham śaucam yacchiṣṭaiḥ paryupāsitam  
bāhyam nirlepa nirgandhamanāḥ śaucam-ahimsanam  
adbhiḥ śudhyanti gātrāṇi buddhirjñānena śuddhyati  
ahimsayā ca bhūtātmā manaḥ satyena śuddhyati*  
(Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra 3.10.23-24)

“Two types of purity are heard of. External purity comes from removal of dirt and removal of foul odour. The purity of the inner self comes from the practice of *ahimsā*. The body is purified by water, the intellect is purified by knowledge,



the *ātmā* is purified by *ahimsā* and the mind is purified by truth.”

This has been described in various places. With the help of *ahimsā* and truth, Mahatma Gandhi was able to even liberate colonized India. In the struggle for freedom he tolerated great distress but did not give up his commitment to *ahimsā* and truth.

In Manusmṛti, *ahimsā* has been considered to be of utmost importance in the descriptions of different kinds of *dharma*. Similarly, while listing various kinds of austerities in Baudhāyana-dharma-sūtras, *ahimsā* has been listed first;

*ahimsā satyaṁ-asteya savaneṣūdakopasparśanam  
guru śuśrūṣā brahmacarya adhaḥ śayanam-  
ekavastrānāśakam iti*

(Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra 3.10.14)

“*ahimsā*, truth, non-stealing, taking the holy bath in *savana*, service to the guru, brahmacarya, lying on the earth, wear ing single piece of cloth and non-eating; these are austerities.”

In the same manner, in Śrīmad-bhāgavatam we find that Lord Kṛṣṇa, while explaining the meaning of *dharma* to his friend and devotee, Uddhava, mentioned *ahimsā* first.

*ahimsā satyamasteyaṁ-asaṅgo hrīrasaṅcayah  
āstikyam brahmacaryam ca maunam sthairyam  
kṣamābhayam*

*saucam japastapo homaḥ śraddhā”tithyam madarcanam  
tīrthāṭanam parārthehā tuṣṭirācārya-sevanam  
ete yamāḥ saniyamā ubhayordvādaśa smṛtāḥ  
pumsām-upāsītātā yathākāmam duhanti hi*

(Śrīmad-bhāgavatam 11.19.33-35)



“*ahimsā*, truth, non-stealing, non-attachment, modesty, non-accumulation of possessions, faith in God, *brahmacarya*, vow of silence, firmness of resolve, forgiveness, fearlessness, cleanliness, *japa*, austerity, offering oblations to the holy fire, *śraddhā*, hospitality, worshipping Me, visiting holy places, working for the benefit of others, contentment and *sevā* of the *ācārya*. Both these verses describe the twelve *yamas* and *niyamas*. Oh dear one! If these are followed, they indeed yield fruits according to the desires of the persons.”

While giving teachings to his mother Devahūti, Śrī Kapila Muni says;

***ahimsā satyaṁ-asteyaṁ yāvadartha parigrahaḥ  
brahmacaryaṁ tapaḥ śaucaṁ svādhyāyaḥ puruṣārcanam***  
(Śrīmad-bhāgavatam 3.28.4)

“... .. *ahimsā*, truth, non-stealing, to accept only those things that are required for survival, *brahmacarya*, austerity, cleanliness, study of the sacred texts, worshipping the deity, ... ..”

In Pātañjala-yoga-sūtra, Patañjalī Muni says;

***ahimsā satyaṁ-asteyaṁ brahmacaryāparigrahā yamāḥ***  
(Yoga Sūtras 2.30)

“*yamaḥ* consists of *ahimsā*, truth, non-stealing, *brahmacarya* and non-acceptance of gifts.”

In the Hitopadeśa and in the Pañcatantra, it is stated;

***himsakānyapi bhūtāni yo himsati sa nirghṛṇaḥ  
sa yāti narakam ghoram kim punaryaḥ śubhāni ca***  
(Pañcatantra, section 3 (Kākolūkīya))



“A person who performs unjustified violence against even ferocious beings is devoid of compassion. Then what to speak of him who performs violence against innocent living entities?” Such people go to hell by their *karma*. It is said;

*dharmārtha kāma mokṣeṣu puruṣārtheṣu bharatarṣabha  
yaccehāsti tadanyatra yannehāsti na tatkvacit*

“*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa* are the four *puruṣārthas*. One reaps in the afterworld that which he sows in this world.” This is the law of the material world.

Regarding the importance of *ahiṃsā*, the Mahābharata says;

*ahiṃsā nirataḥ svargam-gacchediti matirmama*  
(Mahābhārata Vana parva 181.2)

“One who is committed to *ahiṃsā* ascends to heaven – this is my belief.”

*Ahiṃsārtha-samāyuktaiḥ kārṇaiḥ svargam-aśnute*  
(Mahābhārata Vana parva 181.10)

“Due to the fact that one is attached to *ahiṃsā*, one enjoys heaven.”

*ahiṃsā dharmanityatā*  
(Mahābhārata Vana parva 181.42)

“*ahiṃsā* is the eternal state of *dharma*.”

*ahiṃsā caiva jantuṣu*  
(Mahābhārata Vana parva 189.22)

“... and, indeed, *ahiṃsā* towards all living entities.”

*ahimsā paramo dharmah*

(Mahābhārata Vana parva 207.74)

“*ahimsā* is the supreme *dharma*.”

*ahimsā satya-vacanam*

*bhūtānām anukampakāḥ*

*santo lokasākṣinaḥ*

(Mahābhārata Vana parva 207.91, 92 & 93)

“*ahimsā* is of the nature of truthfulness in speech and of kindness towards all living entities. The world witnesses it in the behaviour of saintly persons.”

*ahimsā samatā śāntiḥ*

(Mahābhārata Vana parva 314.8)

“*ahimsā* is equanimity and peace.”

In the Udyoga Parva (3.52) of Mahābhārata it is stated;

*ahimsaikā sūkhāvahā*

“*ahimsā* alone is the carrier of happiness”.

In Droṇa Parva (192.38) of Mahābhārata it is stated;

*ahimsā sarvabhūteṣu dharma-jyāyaskaram viduḥ*

“Understand that the supreme form of *dharma* is *ahimsā* towards all living entities”.

In the description of *rāja-dharma* in Śānti parva of Mahābhārata it is stated;



***ahimsā mandako'jalpo mucyate sarva kilbiṣaiḥ***  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 35.37)

“*ahimsā* releases even the less intelligent people from all sins.”

***ahimsā satyaṁ akrodhaḥ kṣamejyā dharma lakṣaṇam***  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 36.10)

“*ahimsā*, truthfulness, non-anger, forgiveness and charity are the symptoms of *dharma*.”

***ahimsā satyamakrodho vṛttidāyānupālanaṁ***  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 65.20)

“One must nurture such mental tendencies that produce the qualities of *ahimsā*, truth and non-anger.”

***yeṣvānṛṣaṁsyaṁ satyaṁ cāpyahimsā tapa ārjavam***  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 80.4)

“... in them who have mercy, truthfulness, *ahimsā*, austerity and simple-heartedness”.

***ahimsako jñāna-triptaḥ sa brahmāsanam arhati***  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 79.6)

“One who practices *ahimsā* and who is satisfied by the supreme knowledge about Reality, is qualified to occupy the seat of Brahman”.

***ahimsā satyavacanam ānṛṣaṁsyaṁ damo'ghṛṇā  
etat tapo vidurdhirā na śarīrasya śoṣaṇam***  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 79.18)

“O calm ones! Understand that austerity does not mean

torturing the body. It means practice of *ahimsā*, truthfulness of speech, mercy, control of senses and non-hatred.”

*ahimsā sarva bhūteṣu satyavāk sudṛḍhavrataḥ*  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 111.6)

“*ahimsā* towards all living entities and truthfulness of speech are strict vows.”

In Śānti-Parva of Mahābhārata, while describing *āpada-dharma*, it is stated;

*ahimsā satyavacanam dānam-indriya nigrahaḥ*  
*etebhyo hi mahārāja tapo nānaśanāt param*  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 161.8)

“O great king! *ahimsā*, truthfulness of speech, charity and control of the senses are supreme austerities; mere fasting is not austerity”.

*ahimsā caiva rājendra satyākārastrayaśa*  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 162.9)

“... .. and indeed *ahimsā*, O king, are the thirteen forms of truth.”

In *mokṣa dharma* of Śānti Parva of Mahābhārata, we find the statement;

*ahimsā sarvabhūtānām maitrāyaṇagataścaret*  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 189.12)

“... .. *ahimsā* towards all living entities and one must behave like a friend of all.”



*ahimsakah samah satyo dhṛtimān niyatendriyah  
saranyah sarva bhūtānām gatim āpnotyanuttamām*  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 245.20)

“One who practices *ahimsā*, maintains equanimity, has wisdom, keeps his senses under his control and provides protection to all living entities achieves the supreme destination of life.”

*anuvartāmahe vṛttam ahimsrāṇām mahātmanām*  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 262.19)

“We follow the examples of behaviour of the great souls who practise *ahimsā*.”

Similar statements are also seen in *anuśāsana parva* and in *aśvamedha parva*. Throughout the scriptures, statements are found stressing the importance of practising *ahimsā* for the protection and welfare of the whole creation.

There are certain instances in the *dharma-sāstras* (*smṛti* texts) where it appears that there are recommendations of animal sacrifice in *yajñas*. In light of the above *śruti* statements glorifying *ahimsā*, there seems to be a contradiction between the *śruti* and the *smṛti* texts. But it is not actually so. It is important to understand how to resolve this apparent inconsistency.

The *Mīmāṃsā sūtras* of Maṇḍanīyaka explain what is to be done in circumstances where there appears to be a contradiction between *śruti* and the *smṛti* texts;

*virodhe tvanapekṣam syādasati hy anumānam*  
(Jaiminī Pūrva Mīmāṃsā darśana 1.3.3)



According to this *sūtra*, if a contradiction appears between the provisions given in *śruti* and *smṛti* texts, the provisions given by the *smṛti* statement do not hold. If there is no *śruti* statement against a *smṛti* statement, the *smṛti* statement must be followed. Also, in such cases it is to be understood that the *śruti* text in support of that *smṛti* provision did exist in the past but is lost with the passage of time, and is no longer available. Just like *śruti* statements have authority, *smṛti* statements also have authority, but the authority of *śruti* texts supersedes that of the *smṛti* texts.

Manu has also stated that for enquiry about *dharma*, the authority of *śruti* statement is to be considered. It is stated –

*artha-kāmeṣvasaktānāṃ dharma-jñānaṃ vidhīyate  
dharmaṃ jijñāsamānānāṃ pramāṇaṃ paramaṃ śrutih*  
(Manusmṛti 2.13)

“True knowledge of *dharma* can be had only by them who are not attached to materialism and sense indulgence. For those who enquire about *dharma*, the *śruti* statements are the supreme authority.”

The Mahābhārata says that the *smṛti śāstras*, which contradict the Vedas and are abhorrent in nature, are in the mode of *taṃas* and therefore they do not produce results.

To help resolve the apparent contradictions between *śruti* scriptures and *smṛti* scriptures, Jābāla Muni has said;

*śruti smṛti virodhe tu śrutireva garīyasi  
avirodhe sadā kāryaṃ smārtaṃ vaidikavat sadā*

“In case of contradictions between *śruti* and *smṛti*, the *śruti* has more weightage. If there is no contradiction, the activities



prescribed in *smṛti* should always be done as if they are prescribed by *śruti*.”

The Purāṇas also state that in case of disagreement between *śruti* and *smṛti*, the authority of *smṛti* does not hold.

Thus the concept of *ahimsā* has been analysed. To summarize; *ahimsā* does not produce distress. It always pleases one's own self and others. Hence the *dharma* of *ahimsā* must be adopted.

It is argued that eating of beef is recommended in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. In support of the argument the following lines are quoted from this book;

*atha ya icchet putro me paṇḍito vigītaḥ samitiṅgamah  
śusṛūṣitām vācam bhāṣitā jāyeta sarvān vedān anubruvīta  
sarvaṁ āyuriyāditi māṁsaudanam pācayitvā  
sarpiṣmantam aśnīyātām īśvarau janayitavai aukṣeṇa  
vārṣabheṇa vā*

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.4.18)

With the intention of justifying eating of beef, this statement was translated into English by Raja Rajendralal Mitra in his book, “Beef in Ancient India”;

“And if a man wishes that a learned son should be born to him, famous, a public man, a popular speaker, that he should know all the Vedas and that he should live to his full age, then after having prepared boiled rice with meat and butter, he and his wife should both eat, being fit to have offspring. The meat should be of a full-grown or of an old bull.”

The British understood the meaning of this statement of the



Upaniṣad as translated above and continued to promote eating of beef. Hence it is important to determine the true meaning of this statement of the Upaniṣad.

This statement of the Upaniṣad is preceded by the following four statements:

1) *sa ya ichhet putro me śuklo jāyeta vedam anubruvita sarvam āyuriyāditi kṣīraudanam pācayitvā sarpiṣmantam aśnīyātām īśvarau janayitavai*

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.4.14)

“One who wants a fair complexioned son with long life who would be a scholar of one Veda must eat rice cooked with milk and mixed with *ghee*.”

2) *atha ya ichhet putro me kapilaḥ pingalo jāyeta dvau vedāvanubruvita sarvam āyuriyāditi dadhyodanam pācayitvā sarpiṣmantam aśnīyātām īśvarau janayitavai*

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.4.15)

“One who wants a brown complexioned son with long life who would be a scholar of two Vedas must eat rice cooked with curd and mixed with *ghee*.”

3) *atha ya ichhet putro me śyāmo lohitaḥ jāyeta trīṇ vedān anubruvita sarvam āyuriyādityudaudanam pācayitvā sarpiṣmantam aśnīyātām īśvarau janayitavai*

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.4.16)

“One who wants a son with dark complexion and red eyes with long life who would be a scholar of three Vedas must eat rice cooked with water and mixed with *ghee*.”

4) *atha ya ichhet duhitā me paṇḍitā jāyeta sarvam*



*āyuriyāditi tilaudanam pācayitvā sarpiṣmantam aśniyātām  
īśvarau janayitavai*

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.4.17)

“One who wants a daughter with long life who would be a scholar of the Vedas must eat rice cooked with sesame seeds and mixed with *ghee*.”

According to the Western scholars, the chronological sequence of the four Vedas is R̥gveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda. If we presume that the sequence of the Vedas mentioned in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad corresponds to this order; to produce sons well versed in the different Vedas, the food of the parents must be as follows.

- 1) For knowledge of R̥gveda, the parents must take rice cooked with milk mixed with *ghee*.
- 2) For knowledge of R̥gveda and Yajurveda, the parents must take rice cooked with curd mixed with *ghee*.
- 3) For knowledge of R̥gveda, Yajurveda and Sāmaveda, the parents must take rice cooked with water mixed with *ghee*.
- 4) For knowledge of all the four Vedas, the parents must take rice cooked with beef mixed with *ghee*.

If the view of Western scholars is accepted; one must eat beef to attain knowledge of Atharva Veda. In the above explanations, for the knowledge of one, two or three Vedas, there is no mention of consuming the meat of even smaller animals like goats. Then why, to attain knowledge of the fourth Veda, would an inconsistent rule of eating beef suddenly arise? The unexpected inconsistency questions the accuracy of the interpretation.

It is essential to determine the true meaning of these



controversial statements in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. There are three key words whose meanings must be clarified. They are;

- *māṁsa*
- *aukṣeṇa*
- *ārṣabheṇa*

The word *māṁsa* is normally translated as “flesh”. To clarify the source of flesh the words used are *aukṣeṇa vārṣabheṇa vā*. This means that the *māṁsa* should pertain to either *ukṣā* or *ṛṣabha*. Both these words are normally translated as “bull”. Based on this superficial understanding, Raja Rajendra Lal Mitra has translated the statements claiming that eating the flesh of a bull is recommended. In order to translate the statement correctly, we need to understand the true meanings of these three words, *māṁsa*, *ukṣā* and *ṛṣabha*.

In English, the word “flesh”, apart from meaning the muscles of animals, also refers to the soft pithy portion of fruits and vegetables. In a similar manner, in Sanskrit language of the Upaniṣads, the Vedas and the *Smṛtis*, the word *māṁsa* is also used to denote the soft fleshy portion of the fruits and vegetables. Different lexicons of Sanskrit also explain different meanings of the word *māṁsa*. This requires elaboration.

For example, the statement in Sanskrit, *prasthaṁ kumārikā māṁsaṁ ānaya*, can have two meanings. It may be translated as; “Bring the flesh of a grown-up girl”. It can also be translated as; “Bring one *prastha* (a measure of weight) of the fleshy portion of the herb, *Ghṛtakumārī*”. Both of these translations are equally correct. The appropriate translation depends upon the context in which it is used and the ability of the translator to grasp the real meaning.



Another example in Sanskrit is the word *Go*. It has different meanings, and does not always refer to cow. Particularly, one must look into the literature pertaining to the Āyurvedic system of medicine to know how the word *Go* (which normally means “cow”) has been used to name different kinds of medicines. Some examples are;

*Godantī* – This normally means “teeth of cow”. It is also the name of a specific medicinal plant in Ayurveda.

*Gokṣura* – This normally means “hoof of cow”. It is also the name of a medicinal herb, called “Gokharu” in Hindi. Its scientific name is *Tibulus lanuginosus*.

*Gojihvā* – This normally means “tongue of cow”. It is also the name of a specific medicinal herb in Ayurveda, which gets its name after the leaves that are as rough as the tongue of a cow. Its scientific name is *Phlomis esculenta* (or *Premna esculenta*).

Other examples are;

*Ajākarna* is usually translated as “ear of goat”. However, it is also the name of a tree, called “Arjun” in Hindi and Bengali whose bark is used to manufacture a medicine. Its scientific name is *Terminalia Alata tomentosa*.

*Aja* “goat”, is also the name of a root of a plant that has the shape of a goat’s udder, and is used for preparing medicine.

Words having different meanings, as cited above, are widely used in the scriptures like the Vedas and the Purāṇas. But, while translating them, if somebody forcibly chooses to use the wrong meaning, one comes up with a translation that becomes a blasphemy or a laughing stock. It is necessary for



an authority who grasps the essential message of the scriptures to translate these otherwise ambiguous texts.

The second term, *aukṣeṇa*, has been incorrectly translated as male calf. This word is actually a derivative of the basic word, *ukṣā*. The famous Sanskrit-English dictionary by Sir Monnier Williams gives the following three meanings of this word;

- 1) A bull (as impregnating the flock)

*mahokṣa mahāvṛṣabha gāvaṃ garbhādhānāya samarthaḥ*, i.e. "mahokṣa (*mahā* + *ukṣā*) is a large bull that is capable of impregnating".

- 2) Name of *soma* as sprinkling or scattering small drops,

*somarasah nirsaran rasapūrṇaḥ*, i.e. "full of soma juice that is on the verge of dripping".

In several mantras of the Vedas we find this word being used in this sense. References may be seen in the publication, "Go-jñāna-kośa" (compiled by Late Pandit Sripad Damodar Satvalekar, published by Swadhyaya Mandala Ashrama Patdi, Gujarat), Ancient Period Vedic Section, part II pages 228 to 232, serial 791 to 801.

*Soma* is a kind of creeper (botanical name is *Sarcostema viminalis* or *Asclepias acida*) that has medicinal properties and also acts as an aphrodisiac. One of the meanings of the word *ukṣā* is the juice of *soma*.

- 3) One of the eight chief medicaments (*ṛṣabha*)

*aṣṭavargeṣu ekaṃ auṣadha vṛṣabha nāmaka vidadhāte. vṛṣabha śabdata eva āṛṣabhena śabdaḥ siddhaḥ*, i.e. amongst



the *aṣṭavargas* (eight chief medicaments), one medicine is called *vr̥ṣabha*. The word *ār̥ṣabhena* (used in the text of the Upaniṣad) is a derivative of the word *vr̥ṣabha*.

Here the meanings are in accordance with *Suśrutamān Prakāśa* (an ancient Sanskrit book on medicine). Thus, the gentle shoot of a specific plant called *r̥ṣabha* that has medicinal values is a third meaning of the word *ukṣā*.

The third word in question is *ār̥ṣabhena*. This word is derived from the word, *r̥ṣabha*. The dictionary referred to previously offers the following definitions;

- 1) A bull (as impregnating a flock)
- 2) A kind of medicinal plant (mentioned in *Bhāva Prakāśa* of *Suśruta*)
- 3) A plant, *Carpopogon pruriens* (mentioned in *Caraka Saṁhitā*)

From the above analysis it is clear that while both *ukṣā* and *r̥ṣabha* can be translated as “bull”, there are also other meanings that are equally correct. *ukṣā* refers to the plant commonly called *soma* in Sanskrit (*Sarcostema viminalis* or *Asclepias acida*), which is an aphrodisiac. It also means *r̥ṣabha*. *r̥ṣabha* means a medicinal plant (*Corpopogon pruriens*) of the *aṣṭavarga* group mentioned in famous works of medicine like *Caraka Saṁhitā*, *Bhāva Prakāśa* and *Suśruta Saṁhitā*. Amongst the eight qualities of the *aṣṭavarga* group of herbs, three important ones are *br̥haṇa* (aphrodisiac), *śukra-janaka* (helps in producing semen) and *bala-vardhaka* (tonic). It is also mentioned in these texts that *r̥ṣabha* is a rare medicinal herb that is found on the Himalayas, whose fruits have the shape of bull’s horns, hence the name.

The controversial lines of the Upaniṣad says, “... rice cooked



with *māṁsa* of either *ukṣā* or *ṛṣabha*". The use of either and or in the statement makes it impossible to translate both the words *ukṣā* and *ṛṣabha* as bull, for then, it would be translated as "either bull or bull", which is illogical. Similarly, translating the word *ukṣā* as *ṛṣabha* would make the translation read as "either *ṛṣabha* or *ṛṣabha*". Hence, logically, the proper translation would be, "rice mixed with the fleshy portion (i.e. *māṁsa*) of either the creeper *ukṣā* or the *aṣṭavarga* herb, *ṛṣabha*." This translation is correct also from the point of view of the context which is presented in the opening lines of the chapter in the Upaniṣad (quoted below) where it is stated, "essence of earth is water, ... essence of man is semen". Therefore, to produce healthy progeny one needs to consume medicinal herbs that would help give the parents energy and good quality semen. Both these functions are fulfilled through the consumption of the medicinal herbs *ukṣā* and/or *ṛṣabha* as described above.

To clarify the controversy of the statement from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, it is vital that the intention and correct meaning of the words are known. The context in which the Upaniṣad gives the instructions regarding the food habits of the would-be parents can be determined from the opening passage of the chapter in which the controversial lines appear;

*eṣāṁ vai bhūtānāṁ pṛthivī rasah pṛthivyā āpo'pām  
oṣadhayaḥ auśadhīnāṁ puṣpāṇi puṣpāṇāṁ phalāni  
phalānāṁ puruṣaḥ puruṣasya retah*

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.4.1)

"Indeed, the essence of all entities is the earth. The essence of the earth is water. The essence of water is medicinal herbs. The essence of medicinal herbs is flowers. The essence of flowers is fruits. The essence of fruits is man. The essence of man is semen."



In this description of the essences beginning from the earth and ending with semen, one does not find the mention of the flesh of any animal. The description clearly indicates that the key to producing good quality semen, and hence good quality offspring, is medicinal herbs and fruits. Following this logic it can be understood that the controversial lines of the Upaniṣad actually instruct humans to consume specific fruits and/or medicinal herbs for producing good quality semen, which in turn helps us produce progeny proficient in all four Vedas. The intention of the message of the Upaniṣad must be remembered in order to accurately translate the phrase; “*māmsaudena ... aukṣeṇa vā arṣabheṇa va*”. The incorrect translation of this phrase; “rice cooked with bull’s meat” has led to the condonement and propagation of beef eating, which is the extreme opposite meaning of the original message.

To conclude, the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad certainly does not permit the consumption of bull’s meat. *Go* (cows, calves and bulls) have been declared in the Vedas to be *aghnyā*, i.e. creatures that cannot and should not ever be killed. *Go* are creatures that must be cared for like family members.

There is an explanation of the meaning of the word “*māmsa*” in the following *śloka* of Manusmṛti.

*māmsam bhakṣayitā'mutra yasya māmsam ihādmyaham  
etanmāmsasya māmsattvam pravadanti manīṣiṇaḥ*  
(Manusmṛti 5.55)

“Me will he eat in the next life, whose meat I am eating now. This is the meaning of the word *māmsa* as explained by the wise men.”

In Sanskrit, the word *māmsa* is a compound made from two



words, *mām* ("me", i.e. in the accusative case) and *saḥ* ("he", i.e. in the nominative case). It means, *mām yo atti bhakṣayati vā* ("one who eats me"). Hence, the meaning that the Sanskrit word, *māṁsa* conveys is, "the creature, whose meat I am consuming now, will consume my meat in the future".

The Manusmṛti also says,

*yakṣa-rakṣaḥ piśācānnaṁ madyaṁ māṁsaṁ surāsavam  
tad-brāhmaṇena nātavyaṁ devānāṁ aśnatā haviḥ*  
(Manusmṛti 11.95)

"Meat, intoxicating drinks etc. are unholy. These are food for *yakṣas*, *rākṣasas*, *piśācas*, etc. For *Brāhmaṇas* (one who knows and teaches the *śāstras*), it is essential to have pure food. They must not accept meat, drinks, etc."

But some people take to eating meat and drinking on the basis of statements like;

*na māṁsa-bhakṣaṇe doṣo na madye na ca maithune  
pravṛttireṣā bhūtānāṁ nivṛttistu mahāphalah*  
(Manusmṛti 5.56)

"The tendency of people, normally, is to consider that there is no harm in eating meat or in consuming wine or in indulgence in carnal pleasures. But on desisting from these, one achieves great results."

There appear to be certain injunctions for eating meat during *yajñas* in the *Tantra* scriptures. This requires some analysis. One needs to spend money to perform *yajñas*. One also needs to put in labour for acquiring the necessary items for the *yajñas*. Since *yajñas* are meant for the welfare of people at large, it is necessary to organize a gathering of many people. All these are done through hard work.



Those who are extremely fortunate attempt to perform *yajñas*. But unfortunately they take to animal sacrifice in *yajñas* since they claim that there are injunctions in the scriptures for eating meat at that time. Some claim that the performer of the *yajña* is supposed to only smell the meat at the end of the *yajña* ceremony and that this is considered as a superior rule. They say that smelling the meat is equivalent to eating it because it is said, *ghrāṇena ardha-bhojanam* ("half of eating occurs through smelling"). Thus, while some people say that eating of meat completes a *yajña*, others opine that meat should be smelt instead of being eaten. Hence, they justify their act of sacrificing animals in *yajñas* and say that there is no sin involved in eating meat during *yajñas*, or performing the act of smelling the meat.

Performance of *yajña* involves high expenditure and hard work. How can there be a regulation in the scriptures permitting consumption of meat in *yajñas*? People do not understand that all scriptural statements cannot be applied on the basis of their direct, plain meaning. There are different ways of understanding the scriptural statements. The method of drawing the right conclusion from the scriptural statements is taught in subjects like *Nyāya* and *Mīmāṃsā*. The statements mentioned above, based on which ordinary people feel that meat-eating has been sanctioned in the scriptures, actually forbid people from eating meat! According to *Mīmāṃsā śāstras*, a technique called *Parisaṅkhyā vidhi* is to be applied here. According to this rule, apparently granting a permission actually means denying the permission. Thus through these statements performance of violence during *yajñas* is actually prohibited.

Similarly it is important to analyze the idea of consuming intoxicating drinks, mention of which sometimes occurs in the scriptures. The scriptures allow the consumption of *soma*



*rasa* during *yajñas*, and not just any intoxicating drink. This has a medicinal effect. Taking offerings of *soma rasa* during *yajñas* does not produce inimical results like intoxication. Such rules exist in the scriptures of Āyurveda also for the treatment of the diseased. This drink is an intoxicant if consumed unrestrained but it can be consumed in small quantities for medicinal effect. It is said, *auṣadhārthe surā pibet* ("an intoxicating drink can be taken for medicinal purpose"). One should not consume such drinks for pleasure. Consuming this drink in quantities exceeding the medicinal requirement is forbidden. Hence drinking of *soma rasa* during *yajñas* has a positive effect on the health and well-being of people. Unrestrained consumption of intoxicants, including *soma rasa*, is prohibited.

Now the question of conjugal relations needs to be analyzed. Regulations pertaining to this is mentioned in Manusmṛti.

*asapiṇḍā ca yā māturasagoatrā ca yā pituḥ  
sā praśastā dvijātīnām dvārakarmanī maithune*

According to this, conjugal relations with one's legally wedded wife when performed under the scriptural regulations and under the regulations of the almanac are not sinful. Such relations are for the welfare of the world.

Coming back to the concept of animal sacrifice, we need to understand that this concept has a spiritual significance. What kind of animal sacrifice must a seeker of spiritual realization perform? On the path of spiritualism one needs to use only his own body, mind and related entities. One does not require any external entity for help. If one draws a simile between a *yajña* with animal sacrifice and activities for spiritual upliftment, it can be said that in the *yajña* of spiritual practices, the animal signifies anger. The offering is the self. *Ghee* is



the *buddhi. samidh* (the wood burnt in *yajñas*) are the sense organs. *kunḍa* (the pit in which the sacrificial fire is lit) is the body. Thus is the *yajña* performed. Here the recommendation of animal sacrifice pertains to giving up material attachment. Killing an animal means becoming free from envy and attachment. In this *yajña*, the person who makes the offering is the *manas* (mind) and the fire is *jñāna* (knowledge).

It is mentioned in Mahānirvāṇa Tantra;

*kāma-krodha-vimoha-lobha paśukān chittvā vivekāsinā  
māṁsaṁ nirviṣayaṁ parātma sukhadaṁ khādanti teṣāṁ  
budhāḥ*

In this scripture, animal sacrifice means killing the spiritual animals. Lust, anger, greed and attachment are animals. These animals are cut asunder by the sword of discrimination and the meat of non-attachment, which is beneficial for the self, is consumed by the *jñānīs*. This means that the *jñānīs* utilize spiritual knowledge to get rid of lust, anger, greed and attachment. Thus they become devoid of material attachments and become situated in a state that is truly beneficial for the self. *Yogīs*, great souls and devotees perform this kind of animal sacrifice throughout the day and night and remain watchful of their spiritual progress.

It means that one who has won over his anger actually overcomes the attachments of the senses and possesses self-control. He has the power to endure the pleasures and pains of life and he is full of faith in the Lord. He, by applying his intelligence, engages his mind in the thoughts of the Supreme Lord. He lights the fire of spiritual realization, destroys the influence of all his previous *karma* that he performed through innumerable life-times, and thus liberates himself from the



cycle of birth and death. This is the actual significance of the idea of animal sacrifice. It does not mean physically killing animals. All religious traditions of the world prohibit violence.

In some places in the Vedas, there is the description of *śyena yajña*, where statements like *śyenena abhicarāṇa yajeta* are mentioned. Ordinary people translate this statement as "One must perform *yajña* with the help of hawk for causing destruction through black magic". They misunderstand this statement to think that this *yajña* is meant for causing harm to those persons on whom they intend taking revenge. But there is a spiritual concept behind this too, if the words are understood in the right context. In common language, the word *śyena* means a bird of prey like the hawk. But this word has other meanings, one of which is *ātmā*. Similarly, the word *grdhra*, which normally means vulture, also means sense organs. Based on this we can understand the true significance of *śyena yajña*. To help us understand it better, let us consider this statement from Nirghaṇṭu Grantha, which is a dictionary of Vedic language.

*mṛgānām mārgena karmanāmindriyāṇāmīti śyena ātmā bhavati. śyāyate jñāna karmanoh. grdhrāṇi indriyāṇi grdhyate jñānakarmanoryat etasminstiṣṭhati. mārgena karma karaṇādeva – mṛgaḥ*

The word *mṛgaḥ*, which normally means deer, also means sense organs. The word *grdhra*, which normally means vulture, also means one who accepts something. The *ātmā* takes up the physical body consisting of the sense organs. Therefore, the *ātmā* is called *grdhra* since it accepts, or takes up the *mṛgaḥ* (i.e. sense organs and the organs of action), by taking up a physical body. Hence the *śyena yajña* has a spiritual connotation. *śyena* is that under whose control the sense organs remain. All the senses are under the control of



the *ātmā*. The word *śyena*, therefore, refers to the *ātmā*. If the sense organs are used without being attached to the sense objects, one performs *niṣkāma karma*. The mind is purified through *niṣkāma karma*. When the mind is purified, one realizes the twenty six elements. Then arises the desire to serve the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Lord. This is the real meaning of *śyena yajña*.

In a similar manner, the form of Goddess Durgā also has a spiritual meaning. Her amazing form riding a lion and crushing Mahiṣāsura is well known. Mahiṣāsura (the buffalo-demon) lies on the earth. He is trampled by a lion, on which rides Goddess Durgā. She possesses ten hands. Mahiṣāsura signifies the mode of darkness (*tamas*). Lion signifies the mode of passion (*rajas*). On it rides the mother of the universe, Goddess Durgā, who signifies the mode of goodness (*sattva*). A spiritual teaching is being given through this form of the Goddess. The entire material creation is a manifestation of the three modes of nature – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. This form demonstrates that the mode of *rajas* (in the form of lion) becomes dominant by trampling on the mode of *tamas* (in the form of Mahiṣāsura). Atop the mode of *rajas* rides the mode of *sattva* (signified by the Goddess). This mode of *sattva* provides happiness and peace to mankind. The Goddess has ten hands. They signify the ten *indriyas* (five organs of sense and five organs of action). This means that a human being must keep the ten organs in his own control, give up their unregulated indulgence, work for the welfare of the world, be situated in the mode of *sattva* and get engaged in the service of God and Goddess. By doing so, one eventually goes beyond the mode of *sattva*, to the realm of *viśuddha-sattva*. In this state one performs *samarpaṇa* (complete surrender), *sevā* (selfless service) and *tyāga* (giving up material attachments). This pleases God and the Goddess and peace prevails in the lives of all moving



and unmoving beings. The purpose of human life thus gets fulfilled. Śrīmad-bhāgavatam says,

*sa vai puṁsāṁ paro dharmāḥ yato bhaktiradhokṣaje  
ahaitukyapratihatā yayātmā suprasīdati*  
(Śrīmad-bhāgavatam 1.2.6)

“That indeed is the supreme *dharma* of men, from which a causeless and unhindered *bhakti* of Adhokṣaja, the Supreme Lord, comes about; by which the *ātmā* experiences the highest bliss.”

The question of *yajña* is an elaborate one. Now we shall describe the significance behind *yajñas* like *Naramedha yajña*, *Indra yajña*, *Brahma yajña*, etc.

#### *Aśvamedha yajña:*

The word *aśva* is normally translated as horse, but another important meaning of it is clouds. It has several other meanings like production, stabilization, being in a fluid state and small particles of moisture in air. The word also means knowledge, glorification, productive, stable, etc. Hence *aśvamedha yajña* is a *yajña* that glorifies the divine forces that influence the movement of moisture laden winds.

Another meaning of *aśvamedha* is derived from the fact that the Lord had taken up the form of Hayagrīva, a form in which His face resembled that of a horse. This famous form of the Lord is known by several names like Hayagrīva, Hayānana and Aśvamūrti. The *yajña* in which this form of the Lord is worshipped is also called *aśvamedha yajña*. Lord Hayagrīva is the Lord of learning. Worshipping Him reveals all knowledge to us. It is said,



*jñānānandamayam devam nirmala-sphatikāṅkṛtam  
ādhāram sarvavidyānām hayagrīvamupāśmahe*

“We worship Lord Hayagrīva, Who is like a pure crystal, Who is the basis of all knowledge and Who always exists in the bliss of all knowledge.”

### *Gomedha yajña:*

The word *Go* has many meanings like speech, sense-organs, water, land, Vedas, heaven, bird, lightning, sun, mind, tongue, cow, bull, etc. It is said, *gobhiḥ indriyaiḥ puṣṭam balam buddhiḥ tejaścāitāni sarvāṇi satyam*.

The right kind of food and the right kind of entertainment enhance one's strength, intelligence and brilliance. They enhance one's life span too. Also, they nourish the sperms. The quality of sperms is enhanced by proper use of *indriyas* (organs of the body). They help in producing good quality progeny and thus help one get the right direction in life.

A literal meaning of the word *gomedha* is, “*indriyas* (organs of the body) that are lit up like the lightning”. Hence, a *yajña* that leads to the goal of controlling the senses and making them brilliant is called *gomedha yajña*. The abode of the presiding deity of *gomedha yajña*, the Lord himself, is also called *gomedha*. Lord Nārāyaṇa lies on the divine serpent, Śeṣa on the island called *Śveta-dvīpa* within the ocean called *Kṣīrasāgara*. He resides within the planetary system pertaining to the sun and also lives in the hearts of the *yogis*. Hence He is called *gomedha*. One of the meanings of the word *Go* is the Solar system.

### *Narmedha yajña:*

Similarly there is *narmedha yajña*. A *yajña* that puts an end



to the cycle of birth and death for the *ātmā* is called *naramedha yajña*. Sometimes *putreṣṭi yajña* is done for begetting progeny. Offerings of a medicinal herb that resembles a human form is done in this *yajña*. After the completion of this *yajña* the herb is consumed. This is also called *naramedha yajña*.

### ***Indra yajña:***

The *yajña* done for getting rains is called *indra yajña*. It is also the name of the *yajña* done for getting clouds or lightning or rains. This *yajña* produces rains.

### ***Brahma yajña:***

This type of *yajña* enhances one's attractiveness. It also enhances one's brilliance. Actually a *yajña* makes a person attractive.

It is frequently accepted that in ancient times *yajñas* involving animal sacrifices were prevalent. Those desirous of eating meat had done so under the pretext of Vedic sacrifices. They misinterpreted the Vedas and claimed that *śāstra* promotes such practice.

During ancient times, when the population of meat eaters grew, violence against animals took place on a large scale. As has been discussed, violence is unfavorable to Lord and is never conducive to peace and prosperity. In order to stop such mass slaughter of animals in society and to preach the doctrine of *ahimsā*, the supreme Lord appeared in this world in the form of Buddha. He widely preached the concept of *ahimsā* and severely criticized the practice of animal sacrifice in the *yajñas*. By his influence people stopped animal sacrifice in the *yajñas*, but their desire for eating meat remained and even today, animal slaughter continues, but no longer under the purview of Vedic sacrifices.



Following the appearance of Buddha, Lord Śeṣa incarnated in the form of Śrī Rāmānujācārya to stop such behaviour of people. He forbade his followers from performing *yajñas* accompanied by animal sacrifice. He also forbade them from consuming meat even independent of *yajñas*. He eradicated the practice of violence in *yajñas* and established the practice of performing *ahimsā*-based *yajñas*. He also tried to explain to people the true message of the *Śrutis*. For those whose interest in sacrificing animals in the *yajñas* remained, he introduced the system of sacrificing animal-like forms made of powdered material. Through this practice he could maintain the common interpretations of the *Śrutis* that ordinary people preferred, as well as make the performers of *yajñas* avoid the sin of killing animals.

Animal sacrifice is always prohibited in the Vedic *yajñas*. *Śrutis* say;

*mā himsyāt sarva-bhūtāni*

“Do not commit violence against any living entity”.

However, there is an example which, if misinterpreted, contradicts the statement above. *Śrutis* say;

*agnisomīyaṁ paśuṁ ālabhet*

“*ālambhana* (normally translated as “cutting”, but its real meaning will be investigated a little later) of animals must be performed during *yajñas*”.

As we have discussed, literal meanings of the words are often taken out of context, misunderstood and then others are also deluded. The same happened with the above statement as well and people understood it to mean, *paśustha agnidevasya somadevatāyāśceti*, and continued killing animals.



*Mīmāṃsā śāstras* bring out the real meaning of the Vedic statements by resolving the apparent contradictions between the above two statements of the *Śrutis*. Accordingly, one must understand that when animals are referred to in connection with sacrifices, the real meaning is animal-like forms made from powdered material. Prajāpati Smṛti-vacana is an evidence for this.

*ato māsāṇna me tanmātre vidhinākṛtam  
pitarastena tṛpyanti śrāddham kurvanti na tad-vinā*

“The creator has created *māsāṇna* (grains of raw rice) in place of *māṁsa* (meat), the offering of which pleases the forefathers. Hence wherever the *Śrutis* talk about animal sacrifice, one has to understand *māsāṇna*.”

Here the objection may be raised by the votaries of meat-eating that sacrifice of animal-like forms made from powdered material cannot be considered equivalent to sacrificing animals. The reason they might say is that the act of cutting inanimate objects to pieces is not equivalent to killing a live animal. The answer to this objection is available in the question itself. The Vedas use the word *ālambhana* for sacrifice, a word that people normally translate as “cutting”. If we do translate the word in that way, it refers to cutting a body, and the body of a living entity is basically inert matter. The conscious entity within the animal is the *ātmā*, which can never be cut. And the word *ālambhana* literally means reducing the size of an object trimming it. Hence it is impossible to apply it to the conscious living entity, *ātmā* since it can never be cut by any weapon or burnt by any fire. Here it is wrong and despicable to translate the word *ālambhana* as killing or violence. In reality this word means reducing the size of something. It is used here in the *lakṣaṇā vṛtti*. [Translators’ note: In Sanskrit semantics, one single word can



indicate three different meanings. They are called three types of *vr̥tti*s of a word. They are *mukhya vr̥tti*, *lakṣaṇā vr̥tti* and *vyāñjanā vr̥tti*. For more information, the reader may refer to the book, "Kāvya-kaustubha" of Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa (Hindi translation by Śrī Haridas Shastri), published by Śrī Gadādhara-Gaurahari Press, Vrindavan.] The verbal root *han* means "to kill" and is used to mean violence. But in *lakṣaṇā vr̥tti* it can mean "to cause harm" or "to reduce". For instance, say a person called Devadatta is carrying a pot. If the pot is broken by another person, he can say, *Ghaṭi hato, mayā hataḥ* ("The person with the pot is killed; he is killed by me"). But the true meaning of *ghaṭi hataḥ* ("The person with the pot is killed") has to be understood through *lakṣaṇā vr̥tti*. Here, after the pot of Devadatta is destroyed, he ceases to be qualified as "a person with a pot" any more. Although Devadatta as a person continues to exist, the "person with the pot" does not. Hence, one who destroys the pot of Devadatta says in a figurative manner, "the person with the pot is killed by me". But in reality Devadatta is not killed, only his pot is destroyed. This kind of meaning is called *lakṣaṇā vr̥tti*.

We find the usage "*ālam bhana* of animals" in the Vedas in connection with *yajñas*, which normally people translate as "killing of animals". Hence it is important to understand the right meaning of the word *ālam bhana*.

This word is derived from the verbal root (*dhātu*), *ḍulabhas*. According to Pāṇini's grammar, the *dhātu* (verbal root), *ḍulabhas* is of the *bhū-ādi* type. Its conjugation is *labhate*, etc. The meaning of this *dhātu* is "to obtain". It has no other meaning. Similarly, the *dhātu*, *labh* is also used as a causative verb (*preraṇā arthe*). This kind of usage is seen in various texts like *Maitrāyaṇi saṁhitā* and *sāyaṇa bhāṣya*, as well as in grammatical systems like *Cāndra vyākaraṇa*, *Jainendra vyākaraṇa*, *Kāśakṛtsna vyākaraṇa*, *Kātantra vyākaraṇa*,



*Śākaṭāyana vyākaraṇa*, *Hemacanda vyākaraṇa* and *Harināmāmṛta vyākaraṇa*. Nowhere is it used in the sense of violence. According to standard Sanskrit lexicons, the two *dhatūs* have been used in causative forms.

The verb form, *ālabhate* (a form derived through conjugation of the verbal roots, *ḍulabhas* or *labh*) means “the act of obtaining” in Yajurveda 30.5. Examples are:

- 1) *brahmaṇe brāhmaṇam ālabhate* (one approaches a *Brāhmaṇa* for knowledge of *Brahman*)
- 2) *kṣatrāya rājanyaṁ ālabhate* (one reaches a brave man for bravery)
- 3) *nr̥tyāya sūtaṁ ālabhate* (one receives *sūta* for dancing)
- 4) *dharmāya samācaram ālabhate* (one receives the members of a religious congregation for *dharma*)

Similarly in the *smṛtis* and in the *gṛhya sūtras* the word *ālabhana* (this word is also derived from the same verbal root, and its meaning is the same as that of the word *ālambhana*) is used for “the act of touching”. For example,

- 1) In Subodhinī commentary of Mīmāṃsā darśana 2.3.17, it is stated, *ālabhyaḥ sparśo bhavati*, which means “*ālabhyaḥ* means touch”.
- 2) In Manusmṛti 2.179, while describing the duties of a *Brahmacārī* it is stated, *varjayet striṇāṁ prekṣaṇa-ālambhanam*, which means “a *Brahmacārī* should not look at or touch a woman”.
- 3) In Gṛhya Sūtra 2.2.16, while describing the process of *upanayana saṁskāra* it is written, *athāsya brahmacārīṇaḥ dakṣiṇāsam adhihṛdayam ālabhate ācāryaḥ*, which means “The *ācārya* touches the heart



of the *Brahmacārī*”.

- 4) In Pāraskara Gṛhya Sūtra 1.8.8, while describing the *vivāha saṁskāra* it is stated *varo vadhvā dakṣiṇāṁsam adhiḥṛdayaṁ ālabhate*, which means, “the groom touches above the right shoulder of the bride.”
- 5) In the Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa, which follows and expands the message of the Vedas, there is a major evidence of the fact that the word *ālabhanaṁ* in *yajñas* does not mean killing of animals. It is stated in 11.5.13, *yad-ghrāṇabhakṣo vihitāḥ surāyāstathā paśorālabhanaṁ na himsā*, which means “(In *yajñas*) intoxicating drinks are not to be drunk, they are only to be smelt. *ālabhana* of animals does not mean that violence is to be committed on them.”
- 6) The word *sparsa* is also used to mean “giving in charity”. For example, in the statement, *kotiśa sparsāyatā ghatoghniḥ*, that appears in Raghuvamśa Mahākāvya 2.49, the word *sparsāyatā* is used for charity.

We also see the word *ālabhana* being explained as “the act of sprinkling water”.

[Translators’ note : The Sanskrit poet Kālidāsa, in his famous work, Meghadūtam, writes a verse (1.45) in which the word *ālabha* has been used. The relevant part of the verse is, “... *vyālabhethāḥ surabhitanayā ālabhajām mānayaṣyan, srotomūrtyā bhuvi pariṇatām rantidevasya kīrtim*”, which means, “... do stop there to offer respects to the glories of Rantideva at the place where the water sprinkled on the daughters of Surabhi (cows) has taken the shape of a river on the earth.” Sri Madhava Shastri, in his work “Kāvyaśaṅgraha”, has written commentaries in Sanskrit on this work of Kālidāsa. In his commentaries he has explained the meanings of the difficult words that Kālidāsa has used. A part of his commentary is given below, in which he explains the meaning of the word *ālabhanaṁ* in this *śloka* as “sprinkling of water”.]



*surabhitanayā – gāvaḥ, tāsām ālambhanam – prokṣanam, tato jātām – prasūtām, bhuvi, ca srotomūrtyā – pravāharūpeṇa, pariṇatām – rūpāntara gatām*

“*surabhitanayā* means cows, their *ālambhanam* means sprinkling or spraying of water, *tato jātām* means delivered from, *bhuvi* (on earth), *ca* (and) *srotomūrtyā* means in the form of a stream, *pariṇatām* means having been transformed.”

Thus, we have this instance where the word *ālambhana* is used for the act of sprinkling or spraying.

Wherever the word *ālambhana* is seen in the *Śruti*s it should be understood to mean reducing the size of an object that is in the shape of an animal. It should not be understood as killing a live animal.

In Manusmṛti wherever eating of meat is forbidden, it must be understood that killing of animals is also forbidden.

Therefore, those who have a spiritual inclination must lead a violence-free life for elevation of his own self. The *śāstras* say that the first step towards realization of God is *ahiṃsā*.

The teacher of the Bhagavad-Gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself states clearly that the *Jīvātmā* is extremely subtle. It cannot be cut by weapons, it cannot be burnt by fire, it cannot be dried by wind and it cannot be drenched by water. Hence it is always immortal. By living on the basis of this realization one is freed from all kinds of fear.

In the Śānti Parva of the Mahābhārata, in the context of *uparicara vasu upākhyāna*, it is stated “Only grains, etc. are to be used as per regulations of the *yajña*. No animal like goats should be sacrificed.”



Yāskācārya has said in the Nirukta, “If one gives up the path of true knowledge and takes up the path of violence, even severe austerities will only lead him through a smoky path back to this world for birth once again.” He is not liberated from the cycle of birth and death.

The great ṛṣi, Yājñavalkya has said, “Those who perform deeds that are harmful for the world do not even achieve *svarga*, what to talk of being liberated?” Therefore one must understand that *yajñas* that have violence accompanying them are not for the welfare of the masses. Hence one must not participate in them.

Those who indulge in eating meat or in taking intoxicating drinks on the basis of the sayings of the *Tantra* scriptures do not really understand their meanings. In those texts the meanings of some specific words are not to be taken literally. Those words are *pāribhāṣika*, i.e. they have specifically defined meanings only in the context in which they are used. The general meanings of those words are not to be considered there. We need to understand them.

Let us consider the following verse.

*go-māmsa bhakṣayet nityam pibedamara-vāruṇīm  
kulinaṁ taṁ ahaṁ manye tadanye kulaghātakāḥ*

If the literal meaning is considered, it would encourage the consumption of *Go*-meat and of intoxicating drinks. But in the context of certain kinds of *Tantra* practices, this verse has a specific meaning, and it is not to be interpreted by its usual common translation. Let us understand the true meaning of this verse in the right context. In Sanskrit, the word *Go* has several meanings like cow, tongue, sense-organs, land, king,



etc. Here, the meaning of the word is, "tongue". Here *Go* is not an animal. A substance is considered to be eaten if it touches the palate. Hence *go-māmsa bhakṣaṇa* here does not mean "eating the flesh of *Go*". It means "the tongue touching the palate". Thus, the worshipping and meditating on one's *iṣṭa* (the form of God that one feels naturally attracted to) through *mantra japa*, i.e. contacting the tongue with the palate, is the meaning of *go-māmsa bhakṣaṇa*. This process is also called *upāṁśu japa*. In this method the tongue contacts the palate and remains in contact as long as *japa* is performed. The deity being thus worshipped is quickly pleased. *tajjapastadartha bhāvanam* i.e. concentrating on the meaning of the mantra is called *japa*. One must be fully absorbed in the thought of the *iṣṭa* and on the *mantra* while performing *japa*. A *yogī* who practices this is called *kulīna* (of superior category) in this verse. One who eats the meat of *Go* is certainly not *kulīna*.

Similarly the meaning of drinking *amara vāruṇī*, which normally means an intoxicating drink, is to be understood in the context of certain yogic practices. The true meaning of this practice is explained in the yoga scriptures as:

*jihvā praveśa sambhūtaḥ vahninotpāditarandhra  
candrātsuvati yaḥ sārāḥ sa syādamaravāruṇī*

A *yogi* who performs *khecari mudrā* manages to tear the tissue below the tongue through gradual practice. This allows his tongue to be turned backward. Then he inserts his tongue into the opening in the palate. A unique kind of secretion then occurs through the opening, which the *yogi* sips. This secretion is called *amara vāruṇī* since it kind of immortalizes them. A description of drinking *amara vāruṇī* is found in Yoga scriptures. Hence, the above *śloka* says that a *yogi* who practices *upāṁśu japa* (*gomāmsa bhakṣaṇa*) and sips *amara*



*vāruṇī* belongs to superior category of yogis. He liberates his forefathers.

Similarly, in the yoga scriptures there is a concept of *bāla-vidhavā bālātkāra* (normally translated as “rape of child-widow”). One of the *śloka*s from the scriptures says,

*gaṅgā yamunayormadhye bālaraṇḍā tapasvinīm  
balātkāreṇa grhṇīyāt tadviṣṇoḥ paramam padam*

The literal meaning of this *śloka* is “In between Gangā and Yamunā lives an ascetic who is a child widow. By raping her one achieves the supreme feet of Lord Viṣṇu.” But its meaning is altogether different in the *Yoga-śāstras*. Its actual meaning is available in the following *śloka*;

*idā bhagavatī gaṅgā piṅgalā yamunā nadi  
idāpiṅgalayormadhye bālaraṇḍāstikuṇḍalī*

“The *idā* is called Gangā, the *piṅgalā* is called Yamuna. Between *idā* and *piṅgalā* dwells the *kuṇḍalī*, also called *bālaraṇḍā*.”

In the Yoga śāstras there is a concept of *nāḍis*. There are two important *nāḍis* is the body – *idā* and *piṅgalā* (also called Gangā and Yamunā). In between them lies a third *nāḍī* called *suṣumnā* or *kuṇḍalī* or *bālaraṇḍā*. In ordinary language, one of the meanings of the word *bālaraṇḍā* happens to be “child widow”. The word *balātkāra* is normally translated as rape. But its literal meaning is doing something by applying effort. Hence the verse under discussion actually means “One must, through effort (*i.e.* practice), awaken the *suṣumnā nāḍī* (or *kuṇḍalī*) that dwells in between the *idā nāḍī* (also called Gangā) and *piṅgalā nāḍī* (also called Yamunā). One who manages to awaken the *kuṇḍalī* achieves the feet of Lord



Viṣṇu.” The process for doing this is mentioned in the yoga scriptures. According to these scriptures, awakening the *kundali* within a person is equivalent to worshipping the Supreme Lord.

Thus we see that the words like *go-māṁsa bhakṣaṇa*, *amara-vāruṇī-pāna*, *bālaraṇḍā-balātkāra* have *pāribhāṣika* meanings, i.e. specifically defined meanings that are valid only in the contexts in which they are used. These are explained in the Yoga scriptures. These are topics that are of interest to Yogis only. These topics are not meant for common men to follow. Therefore it is improper to assign a general meaning to them. One should not misinterpret or disrespect them. It is stated,

*purāṇaṁ mānavo dharma saṅgaveda vicikitsikam  
ajña siddhāni catvāri na hantavyāni hetubhiḥ*

“The Purāṇas, scriptures explaining *dharma* (like Manusmṛti), the Vedas along with their *aṅgas* and the medical treatises – these four are realized knowledge. For whatever reasons, these should not be distorted.” These holy texts give us principles that are beneficial to us. The commandments mentioned therein should never be ignored.

The word *māṁsa* mentioned in the Upaniṣads actually refer to the fleshy portion of medicinal fruits and not to the flesh of animals. Similarly, the words *ukṣā* or *rṣabha* do not mean bull, but are the names of specific medicinal herbs.

Just like the words *asthī*, *majjā*, etc. mean bones, fat, etc. of animals, these words are also applicable to medicinal herbs and other plants to describe certain portions of the plant or the fruit. These are described in the Ayurvedic text, Suśruta Saṁhitā (3.32). For instance, words like *kesara* (which normally means manes), *māṁsa* (which normally means



flesh), *asthī* (which normally means bone), etc. are used for explaining the mango fruit. In the *aṣṭaka-varga* of *cyavanaprāśa*, the words *jīvaka ṛṣabha* (also means bull capable of impregnating) are mentioned as ingredients. This is actually the specific name of a compound. The word *ukṣā* means “semen capable of impregnating”. A synonym of this word is *jīvaka ṛṣabha*. It is a medicinal compound that enhances one’s strength and makes the quality of semen better. Semen is called life, as in the verse –

*cittādhīnaṁ nṛṇāṁ śukraṁ śukrādhīnaṁca jīvanam  
tasmācchukraṁ manaścaiva rakṣaṇīyaṁ prayatnataḥ*

“Under the control of man’s mind is his semen. Under the control of the semen is his life. Therefore, one must make an effort to protect both semen and mind.”

The compound, *ukṣā* is called *jīvaka* since it bestows strength and longevity. Similarly, *ṛṣabha* is also a medicinal herb that enhances one’s strength and longevity. Both these herbs grow on the Himālayas. It is written –

*jivakarṣabhakau jñeyau himādri sikharodbhavau  
raṣanakandavat kandau rīṣārāḥ sūkṣma patrakau  
jivaka kūrcaḥ kākārah ṛṣabhi vṛṣaśṛṅgavat*

Thus has been explained the concept of *Go-māṁsa bhakṣaṇa* (normally translated as “eating the meat of *Go*”) mentioned in the scriptures.

The Vedas state the following about *Go*, which will set to rest the doubts that people might have about the idea of killing *Go*. The Vedic lexicon, *Nighaṇṭu* gives nine synonyms of the word *Go*. Out of them, the following three are names that literally mean “not to be killed”.



- 1) “*aghnyā*” (*a + ghnya*) meaning “not to be killed”
- 2) “*ahi*” meaning is same as above
- 3) “*aditi*” (*a + diti*) meaning “that which cannot be cut”.

These words imply that a *Go* cannot be sacrificed in any *yajña*. In the Śānti Parva of Mahābhārata it is stated,

***aghnyā iti gavām nāma ka etaṁ hantumarhati  
mahaccakārākuśalaṁ vṛṣāṁ gām vā*”labhetu yaḥ**  
(Mahābhārata Śānti Parva 262.47)

“The very name of *Go* is *aghnyā* (“not to be killed”). Being so, who ought to kill them? Those who kill a *Go* commit the greatest of sins”. This prohibition is the prescribed rule.

If we consider the synonyms of the word, *yajña* given in the lexicons, we will find that one of them is the word, *adhvarā*, which also means “non-killing”. The word *dhvarā* means violence. Its opposite is *addhvarā*, i.e. *ahimsā* or non-violence. Thus it has been established that no violence of any kind must be performed in connection with *yajñas* and in *medhas*.

In *Go-medha*, the verbal root (*dhātu*) is *medhr*. There are three meanings of this word: 1. enhancing intelligence, 2. The act of taking up the company of someone and 3. An act of violence. We see that although violence is one of the meanings of this word, there are two other meanings associated with this word as well. Thus the other two meanings of *Go-medha*, i.e. “associating with *Go*” and “augmenting the *Go* family” are two meanings that are more powerful since two meanings are more powerful than one. Also, there could be another way of analyzing which of the three meanings of *Go-medha* is to be considered. The act of associating and keeping company of *Go* and the act of



augmenting the family of *Go* are two acts that seem to go together. But the third meaning, namely the act of committing violence on *Go*, cannot go together with the other two acts. Hence it makes more sense to accept the meaning of *Go-medha* as keeping company of *Go* and augmenting their numbers, rather than committing violence on them. Further, there are strict injunctions in the Vedas forbidding us to kill *Go*. For example,

*gām mā himsoraditiṁ virajām*

(Yajurveda 13.42)

“The *Go* is illustrious and inviolable”

*ghṛtaṁ duhānāmaditaṁ janāya mā himsī*

(Yajurveda 13.49)

“The *Go* is inviolable and they yield *ghee* for the people. Do not slay the *Go*”.

*tejasviniṁ gauravadhyā – ahimsā bhavato vā gauśca  
anupameyā. vedasyābhimadamidaṁ yat sarveṣāṁ  
padārthānāmupamā sulabhā, na tu goḥ gauśca  
yādṛśamupakāraṁ samasta mānavajāteḥ kṛtavān na  
tādṛśamanyah*

“The brilliant creature, *Go* is always ‘unkillable’. It is an ideal for comparing everything with, yet it has no comparison for itself. Nothing benefits the human society more than *Go* does.” The Yajurveda states;

*brahma sūryasamaṁ jyotirdyauḥ samudrasamaṁ saraḥ  
indrah prthivyaḥ varṣiṇāṁ gostu mātṛā na vidyate*

(Yajurveda 23.48)

“The effulgence of knowledge may be compared to the sun.



The heaven may be compared to the sky. Indra has more weightage than the earth has. But no comparison exists for *Go*". This statement substantiates that *Go* is accorded an extremely high place in the Vedas. Hence it is evident that no violence against the *Go* is permitted.

The ṛgveda 1.64.27 says,

*duhāmaśvibhyāṁ pago aghnyeyāṁ sā vardhatām mahate  
saubhagāya*

"May the inviolable *Go* offer milk to both the Aśvinīkumāras. May they always prosper for our welfare". The *mantra*, *sā aghnyeyāṁ vardhatām* above means "May the inviolable *Go* keep increasing in numbers" for the welfare of the entire human society. It is absolutely essential for *Go* to be present in the society for the prosperity of all. Hence, violence against *Go* is totally banned and the *Go* is called *aghnyā* in the Vedas, meaning, "that which cannot and should not be killed". But, unfortunately, those who are greedy for eating meat kill them. If they are told that no *yajña* permits violence against animals, they kill them even without *yajñas*. Śrīmad-bhāgavatam forbids the killing of animals for meat in the following verse.

*te me mataṁ avijñāya parokṣaṁ viśyātmakaḥ  
himsāyāṁ yadi rāgaḥ syādyajña eva na codanā*  
(Śrīmad-bhāgavatam 11.21.29)

"Not knowing my opinion, which is not quite apparent, if those materialists find pleasure in violence, let them indulge in it only in *yajñas*."

People commit violence in *yajñas* since they have the desire to eat meat. The injunction in the above statement of Śrīmad-bhāgavatam is not a statement that prescribes violence in



*yajñas*. It is spoken thus, only to show that violence should be shunned. It is not a *vidhi vākya* (a prescriptive statement), but a *niṣedha vākya* (a prohibitory statement). This mentions a rule of prohibition, not a rule of duty. In the next verse of Śrīmad-bhāgavatam Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says,

*himsāvihārā hyālabdhaiḥ paśubhiḥ svasukhecchayā  
yajante devatā yajñaiḥ pitṛbhūtapatīn khalāḥ*  
(Śrīmad-bhāgavatam 11.21.30)

“Evil-minded individuals kill other creatures and perform *yajñas* with their flesh for their own pleasure. They indulge in violence and make a show of pleasing the *devatās* and the forefathers.”

This is because they have the habit of eating meat. Hence it is clearly mentioned in the Mahābhārata that the practice of killing animals in *yajñas* was started by wicked people. This injunction of offering animals in sacrifices does not originally appear in the Vedas.

*surā matsyā madhumāṁsamāsavaṁ kṛsaraudanam  
dhūrtaiḥ pravartitāṁ hyetannaitadvedeṣu kalpitam  
vijairyajñeṣu yaṣṭavyamiti vai vaidikī śrutīḥ  
aja sañjnāni bījāni chāgaṁ na hantumārhatā  
naiṣa dharmāḥ satām devā yatra vai vadhyate paśuḥ*  
(Mahābhārata Śānti parva 337.4.5 & 324.4.5)

“The wicked people have propagated the practice of consuming meat, fish, drinks, honey and decomposed rice. They do not exist in the Vedas. The *Śruti* statements in the Vedas tell us that seeds must be offered in the *yajñas*. The word *aja* (used in the Vedas) should be understood to mean seeds, and not goats. Hence one must not kill goats. The *devatās* are not satisfied in places where animals are killed.”



Hence, at all times and at all places it is important to follow the practice of *ahimsā* for the welfare of the society and the world.

Not the *sāstras* from Bhārata-varṣa alone, but even the Christian texts have statements that forbid the killing of animals. For instance, it is said,

“He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man.”  
(Issiah 66.3)

Here Ox refers to both the male and female varieties of Go.

Similarly killing of animals is prohibited in Islam as well. In 28 years (1058 – 1111 AD) the Islamia Institute was set up in Baghdad. The founder of the Institute, Al Ghazali, wrote a book in Arabic by the name *Iha Alum Aladin*, whose sanctity is regarded almost at par with that of the Holy Quran. An Urdu translation of this book was published by Naval Kishor Publishers, Lucknow (U.P.) by the name, “*Mazakul Armin*”. On page 23 of its 1955 publication, statements 17 to 19 talk about the glory of *ghee* made from *Go*-milk and the harm caused by the meat of *Go*. It says, “Meat of *Go* is disease, its milk is health and its *ghee* is medicine”.

In this work, the injunctions against consuming the meat of *Go* that occur in different religious traditions of the world and in different languages have been mentioned. Some people, propelled by their personal motivations, distort the statements of the Vedas and derive from them twisted meanings that substantiate their desire of consuming the meat of *Go*! Such ideas have been analysed. Quotes from ancient texts have been provided here to show that the practice of eating the meat of *Go* was not prevalent in ancient Bharat.



McDonnel and Keith have written in their book, "Vedic Index" (vol. 2, page 145) that there are injunctions for eating the meat of *Go* in the Vedas. They say that there is no statement forbidding the killing of animals in the Vedic texts. They have even misquoted certain Vedic texts to show that since the *devatās* ate the meat of *Go*, animals could be sacrificed and their meat could be offered to the *devatās*. It also states that the *Brāhmaṇas* ate meat. The Western scholars misinterpreted *ukṣāṇna vaśāṇna* statement in ṛgveda (8.43.11) and said that this statement refers to eating the meat of a bull. They said so by misunderstanding the meaning of *ukṣāṇna* as "bull's meat" and the meaning of *vaśāṇna* as the "beef". But their real meanings are "*soma* juice mixed with rice" and "milk of *vaśā* cow" respectively.

A similar misconception is seen in the book, "The Vedic Age" by Sri V.S. Apte. In chap 19, page 389, he mentions that the practice of killing *Go* and feeding its meat to others during wedding ceremony was prevalent in the ancient period. This misunderstanding has been clarified by Late Pandit Sripad Damodar Satvalekar in his book *Go Jñāna Kośa*. On page 11 of part 1 (in the section dealing with the ancient Vedic traditions) of his book, he explains the concept of *luṭṭa taddhita kriyā* in Sanskrit Grammar. On the basis of this concept, it can be understood that the meanings of certain *mantras* in the Vedas are quite different from what they superficially seem to be. For instance the actual meaning of the ṛgveda *mantra* (9.46.4), *gobhiḥ śrīṇīta matsaram* if literally translated, would read "cook *soma* with cows". One would tend to believe that it refers to cooking *soma* with the meat of *Go*. But on understanding that here the *luṭṭa taddhita kriyā* has to be considered, it becomes clear that here the word *gobhiḥ* stands for milk, and hence the real meaning of the text is "cook *soma* with milk".



If people in general were to get attracted towards the concept and practice of *Go-sevā* and if they were to give up violence against *Go*, it would be propitious for the human society. This is because the *Go* is *niraparādhī* (does not offend anyone) and *upakāri* (is of service to everyone).



## GAVĀMṚTAM

In the Mahābhārata there is a question asked by Yakṣa,

*amṛtaṁ kiṁ svit rājendra?*

“O great king! What is nectar?”

To this, emperor Yudhiṣṭhira replied, “*gavāmṛtam* (nectar obtained from *Go*, i.e. milk)”.

Cholesterol is found in buffalo's milk, which settles in the blood vessels. This eventually hinders the functioning of the heart. But the milk of *Go* contains a yellow coloured ingredient called Carotene. Carotene enhances the eyesight, strengthens the heart and does not hinder its functioning.

*Go*'s milk boosts intelligence whereas buffalo's milk increases obesity. The fat content of *Go*'s milk is 4-6% while that of buffalo's milk is 5-6%. People use the buffalo's milk to extract larger amount of fat. But the WHO has recommended that 4-4.5% of fat content is suitable for the human body. A higher percentage can prove to be harmful for the human body. Therefore, instead of being useful, the buffalo's milk could be detrimental.

If we wish that our children grew up into outstanding individuals, one must ensure that they are fed with *Go*'s milk since it has the property of enhancing our intelligence. The consumption of *Go*'s milk not only promotes health and intelligence, but this practice also results in *Go* getting an important place in our society. Thus, the purpose of



protection of this species is also achieved and this eventually facilitates the nation's progress.

An observation can be made that the calf of a buffalo requires to be pulled all the way whereas the calf of a *Go* jogs and jumps along merrily. The mother buffalo fails to identify her child when left for feeding, whereas the mother *Go* can recognize her child even amongst thousands of calves. This signifies that upon the consumption of buffalo's milk one tends to become dull and inactive whereas the *Go*'s milk brings about vitality, intelligence and vigour.

Therefore one should avoid drinking any milk apart from that of *Go*. One should also inspire others to do so. The *ghee* made from the milk of *Go* should be used for holy purposes like *yajñas*, sacrificial fires, and lamps. In farming, instead of using chemical fertilizers, the *Go*-dung should be used and the *Go-mūtra* (urine of *Go*) should be used as the remedial pesticide. For maintenance of health, medicines prepared from *Go-mūtra* ought to be used.

These days, mass produced milk widely available in the Indian market, is adulterated by harmful materials like paint, urea, etc. 15% of the milk bought from the market contains traces of oxytocin. This is a hormone injected into animals to increase the milk yield. Excess of this hormone damages internal organs in the body of the animal and all those who come into contact with it through the food chain. Oxytocin causes diseases like cancer, miscarriages, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, asthma, tuberculosis, etc. According to WHO, consumption of such milk has brought about a 21-fold increase in the concentration of toxic substances in mother's milk today. New born babies are getting poisoned by the mother herself.

Fertiliser is obtained from the urine and dung of *Go*. This



fertilizer has such qualities that it does not necessitate the use of insecticides and pesticides. Food products grown with the fertilizer of *Go*-dung are free from diseases, are nutritious and are tasty. Grains and vegetables available in the market today are not as tasty as they used to be. This is because they are grown by using chemical fertilizers and are sprayed with insecticides and pesticides. Use of these chemicals is contaminating the ground water today and their use has made the agricultural fields devoid of their natural fertility.

If *Go* is made to reside on barren land that does not support agriculture, the land, under the influence of their dung and urine, gradually becomes fertile and fit for cultivation of crops. Our most worshipable being is being slaughtered in large numbers everyday. If this practice continues, the tragic day will not be far when *Go* will become extinct from the face of the earth.

Hence let us pledge to revere our beloved *Go* that is the pride of this nation. We must put the protection and care of *Go* as priority.

The basis of Indian economy is agriculture. The basis of agriculture is *Go*. That part of the agricultural produce that we cannot consume, like hay and husk, is consumed by *Go*. In exchange they give us valuable milk. It is our human mother who gives birth to us and feeds us with her milk for approximately one year. But *Go* keeps nourishing us throughout our lives. Hence she is called the universal mother. Out of 84 lakh life forms mentioned in the scriptures, *Go* is the only being whose "waste" i.e. dung purifies the sanctum sanctorum of a temple. The basis of *pañca-gavya* and *pañcāmṛta* is *Go*. *Go* is the only creature whose urine is as pure as the water of the Holy Gaṅgā. No worms can survive in it. The *devatās* are pleased to the utmost when



offerings of *Go-ghee* are made in the *yajñas* and thus purifies the atmosphere around us. *Go* is a creature in whose body reside 33 crore *devis*, *devatās*, *munis* and *ṛṣis*. *Go* has been called giver of all opulence. Lakṣmī, the giver of prosperity and wealth resides in the dung of *Go*. The holy Gaṅgā resides in the urine of *Go*. Worship of *Go* encompasses the good effects of worshipping all *devis* and *devatās*.

*namo gopāla-devāya vaṁśivādyavilāsine*  
*gopālanāvatārāya govindāya namo namaḥ*

“Obeisance to Lord Gopāla, who sports with His musical instrument, the flute. Obeisance! Obeisance to Govinda Who incarnates for tending the *Go*!”



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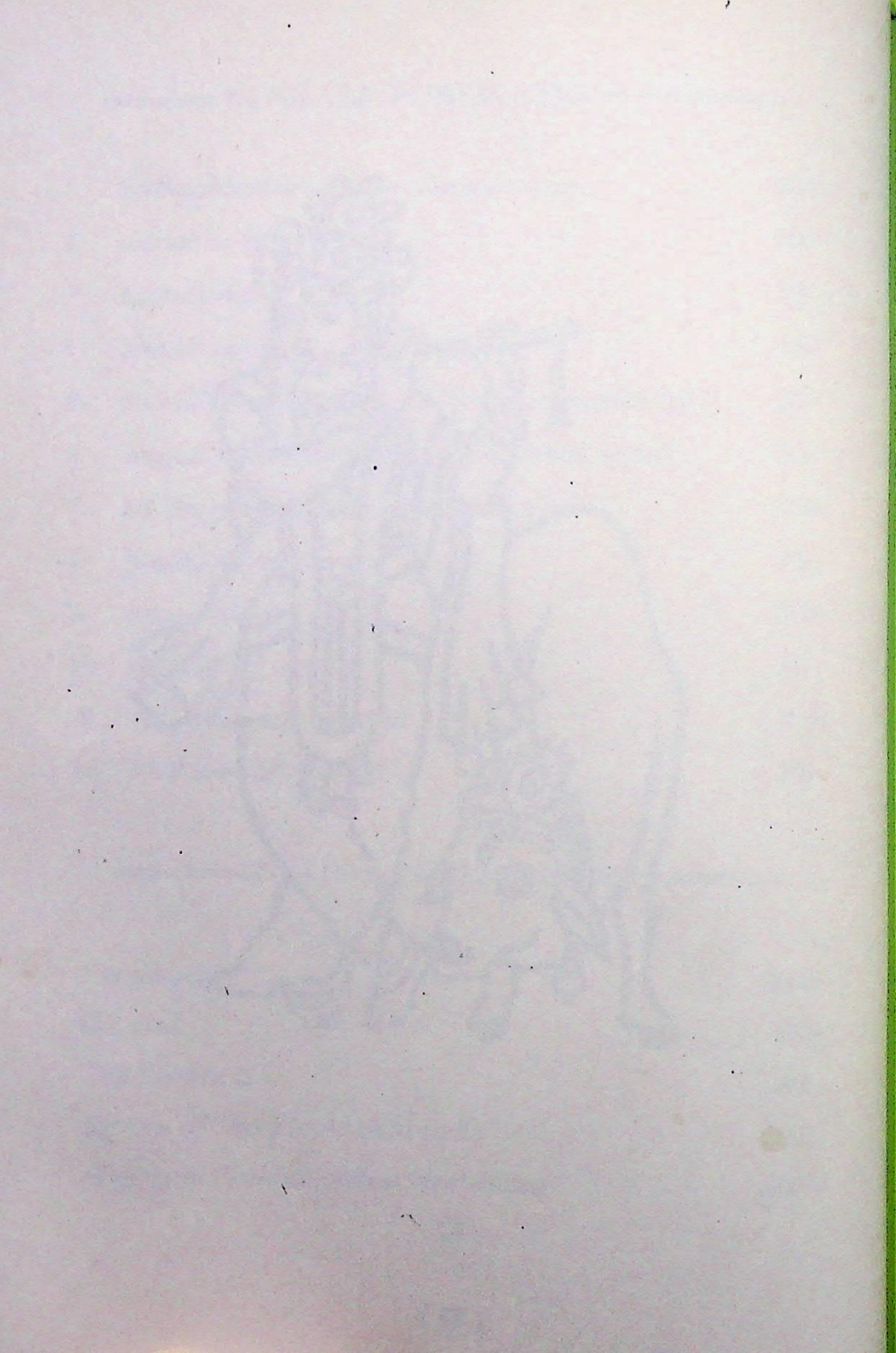
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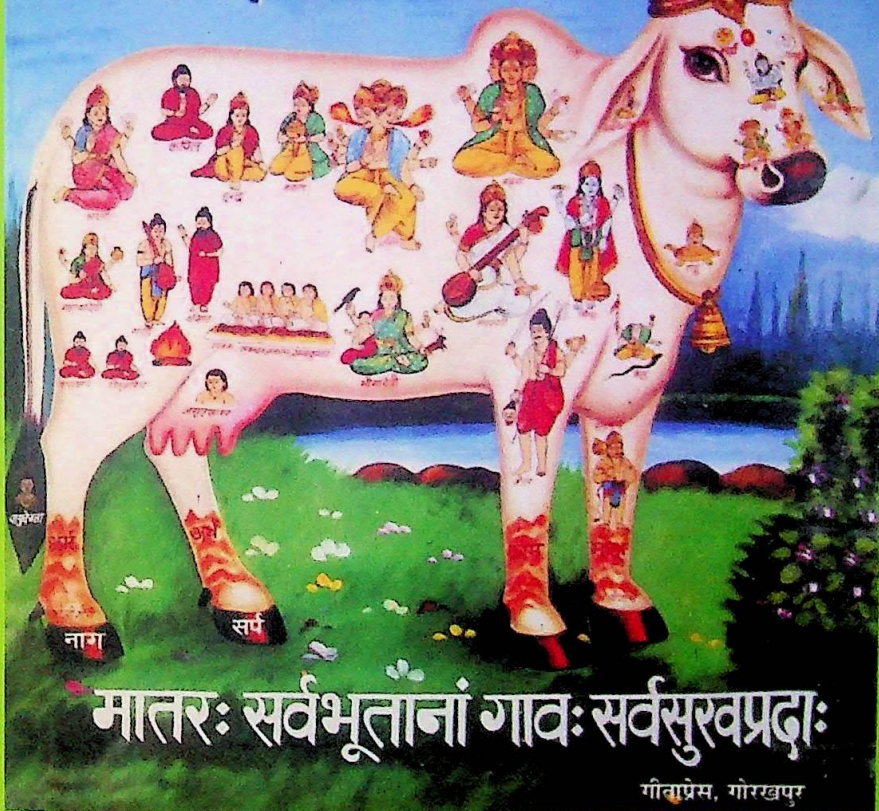








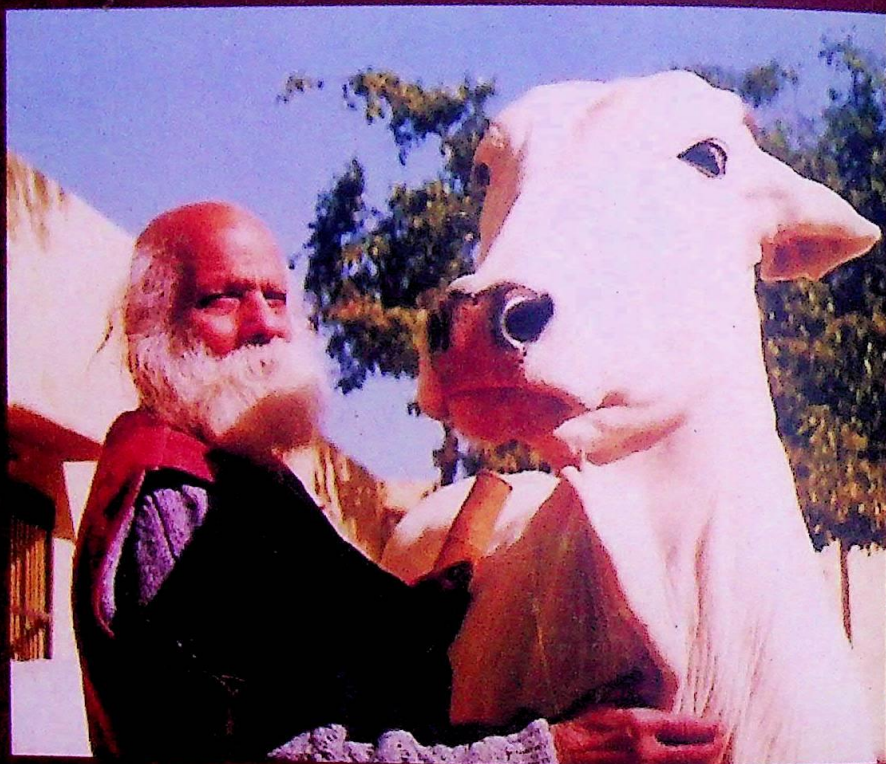
सर्वदेवमयी गौ



*gavāṃ kaṇḍūyanāṃ kuryāt gogrāsaṃ gopradakṣiṇam  
goṣu nityaṃ prasannāsu gopālo'pi prasīdati*

One must fondly scratch the body of the *Go* and remove the insects that infect it. One must offer food to *Go* and circumambulate *Go*. *Go* being pleased, Lord *Gopāla* is pleased too.





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